



## ORAL FITNESS FACT SHEET

# Oral Sex Isn't Safe Sex

**O**ral sex without using condoms or a protective barrier has become a common way to spread sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Many people believe that it is "safe" sex. Many people who are infected don't have or recognize symptoms.

All genders and ranks can suffer from unprotected sex. STD's resulting from oral sex can be a significant **mission impactor**, just like unintended fatherhood and unintended pregnancy.

Body fluids contain bacteria and viruses that live in and are exchanged between the mouth and penis or mouth and vagina. Having gingivitis or periodontal disease causes bleeding gums and can increase your risk of getting or passing on an STD. Sores in the lining of the mouth can also increase your risk.

Some oral problems from STDs make it painful to eat and drink, hot, or spicy foods and compromise your nutrition. They affect your ability to fulfill your duty.

- Symptoms of common STDs that affect the inside of the mouth, lips, throat, and tongue are:
  - Syphilis - painless sore or bump on inside of lip
  - Gonorrhea - prolonged sore throat pain (type of tonsillitis)
  - Herpes - fever, sore or blisters\*
  - HPV - warts or cauliflower-like growths
- Oral sex can cause damage to the mouth such as bruises, cuts, and sores on the tongue or lips

***\*Herpes can easily be transmitted between the genitals and the mouth, even when sores are not present.***

Genital warts have been identified as a risk factor for oral cancer. Other effects of STDs are: aching joints, pain of muscular-skeletal system, pain and discharge when urinating and sterility. STDs can be serious or life threatening for a pregnant woman and her baby. Women who become infected vaginally with an STD usually have no symptoms.

Protect your oral health

- Use latex condoms and/or other barrier during oral sex to decrease your risk of getting STDs.
- Barrier methods such as natural rubber latex sheets, dental dams, or plastic wrap offer some protection from contact with body fluids during oral sex.
- Practice good oral hygiene – floss and brush your teeth to prevent bleeding gums.

#### References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Preventing the sexual transmission of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS; 2000.

<http://ftp.cdcnpin.org/Updates/oralsex.pdf>

American Social Health Association, [www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org)



Directorate of Health Promotion and Wellness

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/oralfitnessmain.aspx>

